



**Permanent Mission of Ukraine**  
to the International Organizations in Vienna

## **Statement on “Russia’s ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea”**

As delivered by Ihor Prokopchuk,  
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,  
to the 1160<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Permanent Council,  
12 October 2017

**Mr. Chairperson,**

At the Permanent Council meeting of 28 September the Delegation of Ukraine recalled that it had been three years since the signing of the Minsk Protocol and Minsk Memorandum which set the ground for peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Donbas region started and fuelled by Russia. Back then, Ukraine immediately showed full commitment to the security provisions of the documents. Furthermore, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted the Law on the peculiarities of local self-government in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as a part of Ukraine’s steps to implement the Minsk agreements. The Law did not take effect as Russia, instead of implementing its commitments under the agreements and thus creating the necessary prerequisites for holding the local elections and election of legitimate representatives, continued to contravene their letter and spirit by maintaining violence, endorsing the fake so-called “elections” in the non-government areas of Donbas and mounting further offensive operations against Ukraine and its armed forces.

Three years after Russia signed the Minsk documents its armed aggression against Ukraine has not stopped. Gross violations of cease-fire persist, parts of Donbas continue to be occupied by Russian regular armed forces and Kremlin’s proxies, Russia has tightened the grip over the territories under its control by enforcing a number of unilateral steps, leading to creeping integration of these territories in Russia’s political and economic space.

It is against this background that Ukraine yet again reaffirmed its commitment to fulfilling the Minsk agreements in their entirety as a way to peaceful resolution of Russia-Ukraine conflict with full respect to Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. As the Law of 2014 stipulated its applicability for a period of 3 years, last week, on 6 October, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted a draft Law on prolongation of this term for one more year. The next day it was signed into Law by President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko.

Ukraine remains committed to peaceful resolution of the conflict and we again urge Russia to honour its commitments, including on sustainable cease-fire, withdrawal of Russian troops, fighters, mercenaries and weaponry from the Ukrainian territory.

Meanwhile, as Russia continues to flout its Minsk commitments, last week the Ukrainian Parliament considered a draft Law that would bring the national legal framework in line with the realities on the ground in Donbas and foster management of social and economic issues affecting the people in the conflict zone. The main elements of the draft legislation include definition of the status of the certain areas of Donbas as temporarily occupied territory with Russian occupation administration as a result of the ongoing Russian armed aggression, improvement of the mechanism of coordination between Ukraine's military, law-enforcement and special forces, as well as civil administrations. The new legislation, which now passed its first reading in the Parliament, will be fully in line with Ukraine's international commitments, including the Minsk agreements.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

As consistently reiterated in this hall, sustainable de-escalation and enabling progress on all tracks of the Minsk agreements remain blocked by Russia's unwillingness to implement the security provisions of those agreements, including a sustainable and comprehensive ceasefire regime.

The SMM weekly report of 4 October specifically points out to: a twofold increase in the number of explosions attributable to the use of Minsk-proscribed weapons; 207 Minsk-proscribed weapons outside designated storage sites (201 of them in non-government-controlled areas); and a large number of heavy weapons registered by the SMM aerial imagery in training areas in the occupied part of Donbas, where the illegal armed formations continue to prevent the SMM from verifying weapons. As the Russian hybrid forces would not renounce violence, there is a growing number of casualties and damages to civilian property and infrastructure reported by the SMM. The hybrid forces continue to endanger lives of civilians directing fire at entry-exit check-points. As an example, on 3 October the SMM reported about gunfire directed at the entry-exit checkpoint near Maiorsk from a southerly direction (where the illegal armed formations stand), on 5 October the SMM registered the outgoing mortar rounds 400m east from the entry-exit checkpoint near Novotroitske, where hundreds of civilians were in the queue. The checkpoint had to be temporarily closed.

We remain deeply concerned that the SMM continues to face intimidations and denials of access by the Russian hybrid forces almost on a daily basis. On 6 October, "armed persons at a checkpoint" west of non-government-controlled Verkhnohyrokyvske "stopped the SMM and did not allow it to proceed, citing ongoing "military activities" nearby", on 8 October "four armed persons stopped the SMM at a checkpoint on the northwestern edge" of non-government-controlled Siedove, "requested to see national passports of SMM members and a patrol plan" and denied entry to Siedove, on 9 October the SMM was prevented from entering non-government controlled Vesela Hora because "a mine hazard sign on the asphalt

road had been moved 100-150m south of its previously observed location”. The last SMM weekly report points to the “tendency to secrecy” in the occupied parts of Donbas. On 9 October the SMM registered stationary on the road a convoy of 30 heavy trucks with covered license plates, but the SMM saw that “all the trucks had “RUS” stickers on their back”. In fact, the strategy of deception of the international community has been an essential component of Russian hybrid warfare from the very first stages of invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

The SMM assets continue to be targeted by the Russian hybrid forces. On 4 October for almost five hours “the SMM camera in a non-government-controlled area south of Stanytsia Luhanska near the Prince Ihor monument was disabled by a laser” emanating from the militants position 70m north of the camera. There is already an established record of the Russian side intentionally disabling the SMM’s technical capabilities when the hybrid forces have something serious to hide. It is worth noting that three days later the same camera “recorded two projectiles in flight from east to west”, assessed as rocket-propelled grenades, inside the disengagement area.

We urge the Russian Federation to stop hindering the activities of the SMM, which is a civilian unarmed mission and must be able to fully implement its mandate agreed by all OSCE participating States, including Russia. The OSCE community needs a full and objective picture of the situation on the ground, which is impossible to obtain when the Russian hybrid forces intimidate and deny access to the SMM and damage the SMM assets.

### **Distinguished colleagues,**

The human rights situations in Russia-occupied Crimean peninsula is steadily degrading from bad to worse. Crimean Tatar and Ukrainian communities remain specific targets. Yesterday the Russian occupation forces mounted mass searches in Bakhchisaray in the houses of Crimean Tatars. According to preliminary information, 15 Crimean Tatars were detained. Grave human rights violations and persecutions by the occupying authorities in Crimea together with their total disregard for the obligations under international humanitarian law underscore the need for the OSCE and its Institutions to use all instruments and assets at their disposal to help alleviate the plight of the people under Russian occupation.

We also take this opportunity to draw attention of the delegations to the XIX World Youth and Students Festival which starts in Moscow and continues in Sochi (Russia) from 15 October. The Festival’s program includes a number of regional trips for the participants, in particular to the city of Sevastopol – the city on Ukraine’s sovereign territory of the Crimean peninsula temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation. In this regard, we reiterate the provisions the UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine”, which calls upon all States, international organizations and specialized agencies to refrain from any action or dealing that might be interpreted as recognizing any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Ukraine established a respective Procedure for persons visiting the temporarily occupied Crimea (Resolution № 367 “Procedure for entry to the temporarily occupied

territory of Ukraine and exit from it” adopted on 4 June 2015 by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine), which allows entry to and exit from the temporarily occupied territory only through the checkpoints foreseen by this Procedure. The persons violating the established order will be liable for prosecution in accordance with Ukraine’s legislation. We invite the OSCE participating States to advise accordingly possible participants of the mentioned Festival from their countries. We urge the Russian Federation as the organizer and host of the Festival to drop its plans of provocation involving the young participants of the event.

In conclusion, we again urge the Russian Federation to stop its aggression against Ukraine, to reverse the illegal occupation of Crimea and return to the tenets of international law, including respect for fundamental OSCE principles and commitments.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.**